

PATENT SPECIFICATION

NO DRAWINGS

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COMPLETE SPECIFICATION

Process for the Manufacture of Acrylic Films

We, FIRMA ASCHAFFENBURGER ZELLS-
TOFFWERKE AKTIENGESELLSCHAFT, a joint
stock company organised under the laws
of Germany, of Redenfelden/Obb. Germany,
5 do hereby declare the invention, for which
we pray that a patent may be granted to
us and the method by which it is to be
performed, to be particularly described in
and by the following statement:

10 The present invention relates to a process
for the production of acrylic polymers, with
the special purpose of manufacturing plastic
films.

15 The usual method for manufacturing
plastic films consists in the extrusion of
polymers or precipitation from polymeric
solutions and subsequent stretching of the
film formed. By means of the so-called bulk
polymerization, polymers with a parti-
20 cularly smooth and non-porous surface are
obtained.

25 It is known that acrylic and methacrylic
acid ester polymers are—depending on their
chemical composition—hard, elastic or
plastic materials. It is further known that
the elasticity of polymers can be improved
by so-called internal plasticizers, e.g. by
30 copolymerization of methacrylic acid methyl
ester with esters of acrylic acid having
short-chain alkyl groups (C_1 to C_{12}). While
the elasticity of products thus obtained is
sufficient for inherently stable materials of
a thickness of approximately 0.5 mm and
more, it is insufficient for the manufacturing
35 of films which have to withstand a consider-
ably higher elastic strain.

Furthermore, it is known that the poly-
merization of methacrylic acid methyl ester
and its homologues, as well as the poly-
40 merization of acrylic acid alkyl esters, in
the presence of phosphoric acid anhydride
and alcohols result in flameproof films, the
phosphoric acid anhydride and alcohol con-

densation product acting as an external
plasticizer which does not take part in the 45
polymerization reaction.

It is further known that by two-dimen-
sional or three-dimensional cross-linking the
swelling properties and the solubility of
such products can be reduced ad libitum, 50
whereby the dimensional stability under
heat and the hardness of the polymers are
increased.

According to the present invention there
is provided a process for manufacturing 55
acrylic films, wherein a methacrylic acid
alkyl ester having 1 to 4 carbon atoms in
the alkyl group (A), in an amount between
50% and 90%, is reacted by free radical
bulk polymerization, with an acrylic acid 60
ester (B) in an amount between 5% and
40% and with 5% to 45% of an ester of a
polyethoxylated product containing at least
one acrylic or methacrylic acid ester-group
and optionally an ester group derived from 65
another aliphatic or aromatic mono- or di-
carboxylic acid (C), the percentages being
by weight and based on the total weight of
the monomers, and the reaction being
carried out between two shaping members 70
to produce a film.

It is to be understood that the acrylic ester
(B) does not include the esters of a poly-
ethoxylated product as defined for (C).

The acrylic ester (B) may be an alkyl (C_1 75
to C_{12}), alkoxyalkyl, hydroxyalkyl, haloalkyl,
epoxyalkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, or alkyaryl
acrylate. A preferred material is an acrylic
n-butyl ester present in an amount of be-
tween 10% and 20% by weight. 80

The acrylic monomer (A) is preferably
methacrylic acid methyl ester.

Component (C) is preferably present in
an amount of 15% to 25% and may be a
dimethacrylic or diacrylic acid ester of a 85
polyalkylene glycol. Instead of the dimeth-

[Price 4s. 6d.]

acrylic or diacrylic acid esters of polyalkylene glycols, it is possible to use the following mixed esters; mono-methacrylic or -acrylic acid -monopropionic or -butyric or -stearic acid ester of polyalkylene glycols, or bis-(polyalkyleneglycol mono-methacrylate or acrylate) esters of maleic, phthalic, terephthalic, fumaric, or itaconic acid:

e.g. $\text{H}_2\text{C}:\text{C}(\text{CH}_3)\cdot\text{CO}-\text{O}(\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O})_n-\text{CO}\cdot\text{CH}:\text{CH}\cdot\text{CO}-\text{O}(\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O})_n-\text{O}-\text{CO}\cdot\text{C}(\text{CH}_3):\text{CH}_3$ is "bis (poly-alkylene glycol mono-methacrylate) maleic acid ester".

It is advantageous to use the mixed esters 15 of the poly-ethoxylated compounds derived from both saturated and unsaturated aliphatic or aromatic mono- and/or dicarboxylic acids.

The polymerization is carried out in the 20 usual manner by moulding, preferably between glass plates or inert metal foils or plastic foils, with addition of the usual free radical catalysts, and, if necessary, of accelerators or activators with or without 25 heat supply,

The process may include the step of prepolymerizing two or more of the monomer reactants.

The polymer films produced can easily be 30 stripped from the supports, e.g. plates or foils, particularly in the case when component (C) is a methacrylic or acrylic acid ester of a polyethoxylated alkylphenol.

The acrylic polymer films produced in this 35 way show, depending on their composition, good properties in respect of tensile strength, bursting strength, workability and transparency.

The invention is illustrated by the 40 following Examples, where all parts and percentages referred to are by weight, unless otherwise stated.

EXAMPLE I

69.7 parts methacrylic acid methyl ester, 45 10.0 parts acrylic acid n-butyl ester and 20.0 parts of the dimethacrylic acid ester of polyethyleneglycol (M.Wt 600) were prepolymerized to syrup consistency with 0.03 parts azodiisobutyronitrile. After cooling 0.3 parts crosslinking agent (the dimethacrylic acid ester of triethylene glycol) and polymerization catalyst comprising 2.0 parts permaleic acid tertiary butyl ester (paste—50% plasticizer), 1.6 parts lauryl mercaptan, 50 1.0 part activator solution, (40% benzyl dimethyl laurylammoniumchloride, 0.217% CuCl_2 and balance ethyl alcohol) were added.

This mixture was poured after de-aeration 60 on to a flat inert supporting film, covered with a second film, and after adjusting the thickness by pressing with a roll, it was polymerized at 50°C to a flexible tenacious colourless film.

EXAMPLE II

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57.5 parts methacrylic acid methyl ester, 20.0 parts acrylic acid n-butyl ester, 20.0 parts mixed methacrylic acid — propionic acid ester of polyethylene glycol (M.Wt 600) and 2.0 parts methacrylic acid ester of a 70 polyethoxylated nonyl phenol were prepolymerized to syrup consistency with 0.03 parts azodiisobutyronitrile. After cooling, 0.5 parts crosslinking agent (the dimethacrylic acid ester of triethylene glycol) and the 75 polymerization catalyst consisting of 0.5 parts permaleic acid tertiary butyl ester (paste—50% plasticizer) and 0.5 parts activator (1 molar proportion of ZnO and 2 molar proportions of thioglycolic acid 2-80 ethyl-hexyl ester) were added. The mixture was de-aerated by vacuum, pressed with a roll between supporting films and polymerised at 55°C. A highly elastic colourless film with high water vapour permeability 85 was obtained.

WHAT WE CLAIM IS:—

1. Process for manufacturing acrylic films, wherein a methacrylic acid alkyl ester 90 having 1 to 4 carbon atoms in the alkyl group (A), in an amount between 50% and 90%, is reacted by free radical bulk polymerization, with an acrylic acid ester (B) in an amount between 5% and 40%, and 95 with 5% to 45% of an ester of a polyethoxylated product containing at least one acrylic or methacrylic acid ester group and optionally an ester group derived from another aliphatic or aromatic mono- or di-carboxylic acid (C), the percentages being by weight and based on the total weight of the monomers, and the reaction being carried out between two shaping members to produce a film. 105

2. Process according to claim 1, wherein the monomer (A) is methacrylic acid methyl ester.

3. Process according to claim 1, wherein the acrylic acid ester (B) is an alkyl (C_1 to 110 C_n), alkoxyalkyl, hydroxyalkyl, haloalkyl, epoxyalkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, or alkylaryl acrylate.

4. Process according to any preceding claim, wherein the acrylic acid ester (B) is 115 acrylic acid n-butyl ester and is present in an amount of between 10% and 20% by weight.

5. Process according to any preceding claim, wherein the ester (C) is a dimethacrylic acid ester or monomethacrylic acid-monopropionic ester of polyethylene glycol and is present in an amount of between 15% and 25% by weight. 120

6. Process as claimed in any preceding 125 claim, which includes the step of prepolymerizing two or more of the monomer reactants.

7. Process for manufacturing acrylic

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3

films as claimed in claim 1 and substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to either of the Examples.

8. Acrylic films whenever prepared or produced by a process claimed in any of the preceding claims.

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